**Forecast-based Financing (FbF)**

**Lessons learned from activation**

**Guidance & agenda for an interactive learning exercise**

**What is the purpose of this exercise?**

The overall goal of this learning exercise is to contribute to the understanding of the implementing organisation and its partners about the performance of their early actions and associated protocols, and to help promote learning and accountability.

Following a recent FbF Early Action Protocol (EAP) activation, the exercise typically takes a 1-3 day workshop format and brings together all key staff and stakeholders involved in financing and implementing early actions in anticipation of an extreme weather event.

More specifically, the learning exercise:

* Provides a space for implementers and partners to capture key learnings after an early action activation;
* Generates lessons learned that can be shared across the implementing organizations and the wider FbF community, as applicable;
* Identifies recommendations to the FbF team (management, staff and partners) for improving the EAP and/or other early action-related plans and decisions.

**Overall questions for reflection that frame the exercise:**

During the learning exercise, the following questions can help you to reflect on the performance of the EAP and draw lessons learned:

* What worked work well in our actions, and why?
* What did not work so well, and why?
* What should we replicate / do differently in such situations?
* Did we achieve our desired objectives in the response? How do we know?
	+ How did we determine these objectives in the first place?
	+ Have we been responsive to changes on the ground?
	+ What challenges did we face?

**Thematic areas for learning:**

Every EAP activation will be different, depending on the hazard and geographic context. Therefore, the learning exercise should focus on areas of learning that are most relevant for the local context. Areas to consider are:

1. The different components of an EAP activation:
* EAP development, including trigger definition / analysis & use of forecast information (planning)
* Early action selection and implementation (activities)
* Effects of the early actions on the target population (outcomes / results)
1. The operational dimensions of the activation:
* Logistics planning, preparedness and implementation
* Financial management
* HR, staff and implementation team / volunteers
* Data collection, monitoring, information management
* Assessment, analysis & decision making
* Safety and security
* Line management / leadership
* Resource mobilisation & fundraising
* External communication

**Who should be involved?**

It is important to involve all key individuals who can meaningfully contribute to learning about the recent EAP activation. Typically, this includes:

* FbF / implementing organisation management;
* EAP implementers with experience from field-level actions;
* Forecast providers (e.g. meteorological agency representatives);
* Government disaster preparedness/response agencies or other partners involved in the EAP process;
* Other humanitarian agencies with similar interventions;
* Representatives from the financing organization, as applicable.

**Which preparations are needed?**

It is recommended to compile all the available data about the recent activation, including but not limited to:

* Forecast information & weather data based on which the EAP was triggered, and data on the extreme event (e.g. wind speeds; water levels; rainfall intensity; etc.);
* EAP implementation monitoring data;
* EAP beneficiary impact survey data;
* Secondary data sources about impacts of the weather event (e.g. no. of houses destroyed in the intervention area, from government; no. of cholera cases following a flood, from ministry of health or local health centres; etc.);
* Financial performance data about the activation (e.g. when was funding transferred; when was it spent; how much is left; etc.).

**Which other resources are available?**

Please structure the content and process of the exercise according to your learning priorities. The internet is full of helpful resources on learning workshops and after action reviews, including for the international development and humanitarian fields. One recommended resource is ODI’s [Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations](https://www.odi.org/publications/153-tools-knowledge-and-learning-guide-development-and-humanitarian-organisations).

**Agenda** (example)

*Note on group work: Whenever “****group work****” is suggested, a large participant group should be organized into group tables or similar. If only a small number of people participate in the workshop, then the exercises may be done in plenary.*

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| **Day 1** |
| Introduction | **Welcome & introductions**Purpose: Participants get to know each other and the objectives for the workshop* Warm up game or get-to-know-each-other exercise
* Introduction of workshop flow and methodology
* Group exercise: Introduction of participants & expectations (1 desired take away per person on a piece of paper, then table groups discuss these among themselves)
* Facilitator collects expectations (on paper) and organizes them on the wall for later sharing (if the group is small, this can be done immediately in plenary)
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| Session 1 | **Timeline exercise**Purpose: Create a common understanding of “what happened and when”; can be done from scratch or with a core timeline prepared* Suggestion: begin with a short presentation on “what happened” to summarize the main facts (key disaster events, number of people affected, where, main impacts)
* Put a series of flipchart papers on the wall and draw a timeline
* Group work: Let participants identify & note key events on cards. One event per card. Three different colors are suggested:
	+ Color 1: Natural (weather / disaster-related) events
	+ Color 2: External event (e.g. actions taken by people, organizations, etc.)
	+ Color 3: Internal event (e.g. EAP decisions, actions, finances, …)
* Reconvene in plenary; a representative from each table places the cards on the timeline, with the help of the facilitator
* Plenary discussion: review timeline, identify enablers / obstacles / critical problems or breaking points
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| Session 2 | **Reflecting on forecast, trigger and the link to action**Purpose: Understand how good the trigger model and the forecast was, and to what extent the information was analyzed, understood and acted upon. * Organize the group by area of expertise/task (e.g. forecasters, field implementers, programme managers)
* Let each group reflect on:
	+ Did the impact-based forecast reflect actual events on the ground?
	+ How timely was the information?
	+ How useful was the information?
	+ Were there any problems with the forecast / trigger?
	+ Do we have new information that can help us refine/improve the trigger
* In plenary, let the groups share their reflections with each other and identify any discrepancies in perceptions → what can we learn from our common understanding and our differences?
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| Session 3 | **Reviewing the Early Action Protocol implementation**Purpose: Participants reflect on the implementation of the EAP and identify what worked well, what did not work so well, and why.* Questions for reflection (either in groups by question, or in plenary):
	+ Were the early actions clearly defined?
	+ Were roles and responsibilities clearly defined? (Suggestion: note down the key roles involved in the EAP implementation and check for each role, e.g.: logistics team, volunteer coordinator, field volunteers, finance, M&E, management)
	+ Did everyone do what they were supposed to do, vis-a-vis the plan? (again, go through the roles/functions)
	+ To what extent were the early actions, suitable and appropriate to the disaster situation?
	+ What were the main problems? (assess by internal and external causes of the problem)
	+ What were the main opportunities that enabled the work (internal/external, lucky coincidence/designed-for)?
	+ How well did the financing mechanism work (incl. timely release of funds)? Were there any problems with the financial aspects of the EAP implementation?
* Share key reflections in plenary and prioritize main problems and opportunities/enablers.
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| Wrap-up | **Reflections** on learnings from day 1, evaluation day 1 |
| **Day 2** |
| Refresher | **Summary of day 1** flow and key learnings* Can be crowd-sourced or prepared by a rapporteur or the moderator
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| Session 4 | **Assessing what we know about the effectiveness of actions and impacts**Purpose: Assess to what extent the early actions achieved their objectives, and whether unintended effects were observed* First, begin with a short presentation on the selection of early actions and theory of change (what were the actions meant to achieve)
* Second, a short presentation (e.g. by M&E focal point) of the available data on (a) implementation monitoring, (b) beneficiary impacts (survey / secondary data)
* Group work: For each action, reflect on
	+ What were the main disaster impacts (in the intervention area)?
	+ What effects did the early actions have, intended or unintended,
		- On physical assets and structures?
		- On the health and well-being of the target population?
		- On the economic activity or status of the population?
		- Any other effects?
		- How do the effects match with what the actions were meant to achieve? Is this over- or under-achievement?
	+ Are there any observable differences between people who received early action assistance and people who didn’t? What can we infer from the differences about the effectiveness of the intervention?
* Plenary reflection on key learnings about effectiveness and impact
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| Session 5 | **Consolidating our learning**Purpose: The participants create a synthesis of the main learning points from each session and prioritize areas for improvement* Group work, e.g. by thematic areas for learning (see first page): Let participants prioritize their most important take-aways from sessions 2, 3 and 4.
	+ Identify main problems in each area (internal + external)
	+ Identify main opportunities/enablers in each area (internal + external)
	+ Identify linkages between sessions 2, 3 4, i.e. between forecast/trigger, operations/implementation/management/finance, and monitoring and impact evaluation.
* Let participants summarize their key learnings for each thematic focus area
* For each area, identify the main issues that need improvement/change
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| Session 6 | **Planning to improve - next steps**Purpose: *For each thematic focus area*, participants draw up a concrete action plan for how to implement the necessary changes* Group work: For each thematic focus area, reflect:
	+ What needs to change?
	+ Who needs to take action to achieve the change?
	+ Who takes the lead / coordinating responsibility?
	+ By when?
	+ What are the resources (people, materials, finances) to make it happen?
* After the workshop, the organizers synthesize the plans into one consolidated improvement action plan
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| Wrap-up | **Summary of day 2, closing reflections, overall workshop evaluation** |

*Note: The duration of sessions 2 through 5, i.e. the core learning and reflection sessions, can be designed according to your learnings needs. One session could be done in as little as 1.5 hours or half a day each.*